

Field-Cycling Relaxometry as a Molecular Rheology Technique: Common Analysis of NMR, Shear Modulus and Dielectric Loss Data of Polymers vs Dendrimers

Hofmann M., Gainaru C., Cetinkaya B., Valiullin R., Fatkullin N., Rössler E.
Kazan Federal University, 420008, Kremlevskaya 18, Kazan, Russia

Abstract

© 2015 American Chemical Society. Linear poly(propylene glycol) (PPG) as well as a poly(propyleneimine) (PPI) dendrimer with different molar masses (M) are investigated by field-cycling (FC) ^1H NMR, shear rheology (G) and dielectric spectroscopy (DS). The results are compared in a reduced spectral density representation: the quantity $R1(\omega\alpha)/R1\alpha(0)$, where $R1(\omega\alpha)$ is the master curve of the frequency dependent spin-lattice relaxation rate with α denoting the local correlation time, is compared to the rescaled dynamic viscosity $\eta'(\omega\alpha)/\eta'\alpha(0)$. The quantities $R1\alpha(0)$ and $\eta'\alpha(0)$, respectively, are the zero-frequency limits of a simple liquid reference system. Analogously, the dielectric loss data can be included in the methodological comparison. This representation allows quantifying the sensitivity of each method with respect to the polymer-specific relaxation contribution. Introducing a "cumulative mode ratio" $F_i(M)$ for each technique i , which measures the zero-frequency plateau of the rescaled spectral density, characteristic power-law behavior $F_i(M) \propto M^{\alpha_i}$ is revealed. In the case of PPG, $F_{\text{NMR}}(M)$, $F_G(M)$, and $F_{\text{DS}}(M)$ essentially agree with predictions of the Rouse model yielding characteristic exponents α_i . The crossover to entanglement dynamics is identified by a change in α_i around $M \cong 10$ kg/mol. The analysis is extended to the dendrimer which exhibits a relaxation behavior reminiscent of Rouse dynamics. Yet, clear evidence of entanglement is missing. The M -dependencies of the dendrimer diffusion coefficient D obtained by pulsed field-gradient NMR and the zero-shear viscosity are found to be $D(M) \propto M^{-1.6 \pm 0.2}$ and $\eta(M) \propto M^{1.9 \pm 0.2}$, respectively, in good agreement with our theoretical prediction $\eta(M) \propto M^{1/3}$ $D \propto M^{-1}$. The close correspondence of $R1(\omega\alpha)$ with $\eta'(\omega\alpha)$ establishes FC NMR as a powerful tool of "molecular rheology" accessing the microscopic processes underlying macroscopic rheological behavior of complex fluids.

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